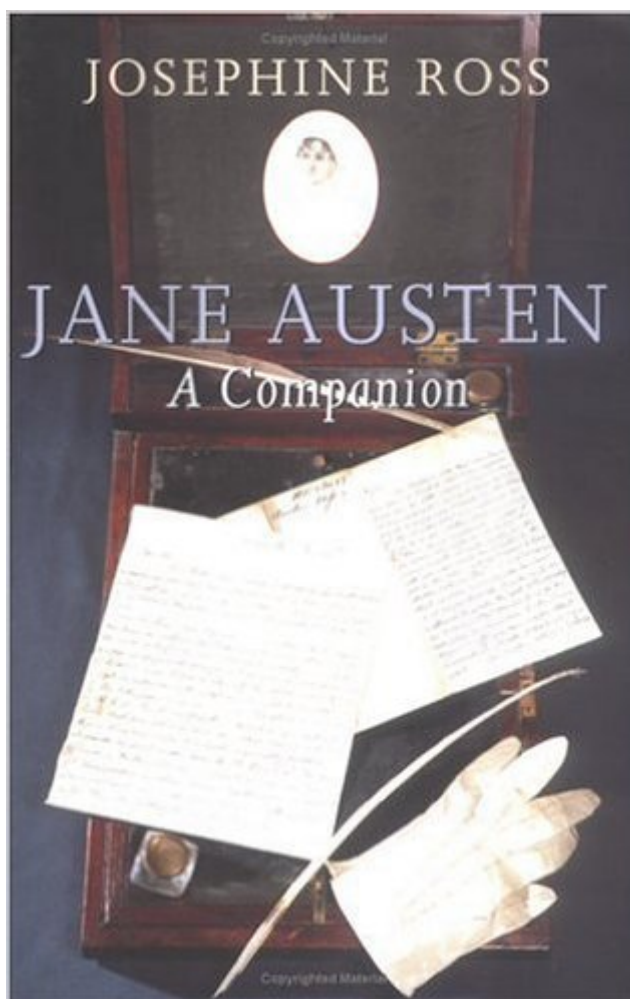


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Jane Austen: A Companion



Synopsis

The only best-selling authors in Jane Austen's league in the English language today are Shakespeare and Dickens. In the twenty-first century her boundless appeal continues to grow following the enormously successful television and film adaptations of *Mansfield Park*, *Pride and Prejudice*, *Emma*, *Persuasion*, and *Sense and Sensibility*. This illuminating, entertaining, up-to-date companion is the only general guide to Jane Austen, her work, and her world. Josephine Ross explores the literary scene during the time Austen's works first appeared: the books considered classics then, the "horrid novels" and romances, and the grasping publishers. She looks at the architecture and décor of Austen's era that made up "the profusion and elegance of modern taste." Regency houses for instance, Chippendale furniture, and "picturesque scenery." On a smaller scale she answers questions that may baffle modern readers. What, for example, was "hartshorn"? How did Lizzy Bennet "let down" her gown to hide her muddy petticoat? Ross shows us the fashions, and the subtle ways Jane Austen used clothes to express character. Courtship, marriage, adultery, class and "rank," mundane tasks of ordinary life, all appear, as does the wider political and military world. This book will add depth to all readers' enjoyment of Jane Austen, whether confirmed addicts or newcomers wanting to learn about one of the world's most popular and enduring writers.

Book Information

Hardcover: 272 pages

Publisher: Rutgers University Press (February 1, 2003)

Language: English

ISBN-10: 081353299X

ISBN-13: 978-0813532998

Product Dimensions: 8.8 x 5.8 x 1.1 inches

Shipping Weight: 1.1 pounds

Average Customer Review: 4.8 out of 5 stars [See all reviews](#) (4 customer reviews)

Best Sellers Rank: #1,416,542 in Books (See Top 100 in Books) #31 in [Books > Literature & Fiction > World Literature > European > Eastern](#) #867 in [Books > Literature & Fiction > History & Criticism > Women Authors](#) #1079 in [Books > Politics & Social Sciences > Women's Studies > Women Writers](#)

Customer Reviews

This review was originally written for the hardcover edition, but on the assumption that this is fairly

similar, I'll repeat it here. This book is a Companion in the sense that it attempts to give the reader context for reading Austen's work, not in the sense of a reference work listing all her characters, etc. It is perfect for anyone beginning to read Austen's works, especially if they have little knowledge of the era. It would also be helpful as a basic guide to the late Georgian period, which is the setting of so many historical and romance novels. Ross starts off with a brief (44 page) biography, followed by 8 chapters on the era: "The Common Daily Routine", "Of Lovers and Husbands", "Politics and Public Events", etc. In each, Ross discusses the era in general terms, and also relates the topic to Austen's life and writings. I read the book straight through, but it appears that each chapter could stand on its own: information is sometimes repeated if it relates to more than one topic. Lydia Bennett's finding ornaments in a book store is mentioned in both "The Present Fashions" and "The Subject of Books." There are numerous plates of well-chosen pictures relating to both Jane Austen's personal life and the era in general. There are no notes, but there is a helpful, but admittedly not exhaustive bibliography and an unusually detailed index. This index isn't perfect, it only lists one of the references to Lydia mentioned above, but it is much more thorough and in depth than most indexes, and helpfully has little notes after some of the entries that may be enough in themselves to refresh the reader's memory.

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It covers various aspects of life in Jane Austen's age using examples from Jane's works. I'd recommend it to people who are interested in Jane's world's life.

This a great book for relating Jane Austen's characters and settings to her real world. There were many historical passages for background for the novels. There were comparisons of her society, politics, military aspects of her brothers' lives, family relationships etc. to her characters and novels. I have several Jane Austen background books and many college history courses on this period of history. I actually learned some new material. ie Josiah Wedgwood's contribution to the abolishment of slavery in Britain.

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